

they offer to meet their objectives. For example, they might persuade a business to start advertising its products in ways it had not considered before.

There are several different categories of services sales jobs. *Outside services sales representatives* call on clients and prospects at their homes or offices. They may have an appointment, or they may practice “cold calling,” arriving without an appointment. *Inside services sales representatives* work on their employer’s premises, assisting individuals interested in the company’s services. *Telemarketing sales representatives* sell over the telephone. They make large numbers of calls to prospects, attempting to sell the company’s service themselves, or to arrange an appointment between the prospect and an outside sales representative. Some services sales representatives deal exclusively with one, or just a few, major clients.

Despite the diversity of services sold, the jobs of all services sales representatives have much in common. All sales representatives follow similar procedures to acquire new clients and must fully understand and be able to discuss the services their company offers. Many sales representatives develop lists of prospective clients through telephone and business directories, asking business associates and customers for leads, and calling on new businesses as they cover their assigned territory. Some services sales representatives acquire clients through inquiries about their company’s services. The Internet now allows all sales reps to better target their clients, display information, research industry trends, and track competitors’ offers.

Services sales representatives obtain many of their new accounts through referrals. Thus, their success hinges on developing a satisfied clientele who will continue to use their services and recommend them

to other potential customers. Like other types of sales jobs, a respected reputation is crucial to success.

Regardless of how they first meet the client, all services sales representatives must explain how the offered service meet the client’s needs. While demonstrating the company’s service, they may answer questions about the nature and cost of the service. In addition, they might have to overcome objections in order to persuade potential customers to purchase the service. If they fail to make a sale on the first visit, they may follow up with more visits, letters, or phone calls. After closing a sale, services sales representatives generally follow up to see that the purchase meets the customer’s needs, and to determine if additional services can be sold. Good customer service is an important factor in developing a satisfied clientele and can give a company an advantage in competing for future business.

Services sales work varies with the kind of service sold. Selling highly technical services, such as communications systems or computer consulting services, involves complex and lengthy sales negotiations. In addition, sales of such complex services may require extensive after-sale support. In these situations, sales reps may operate as part of a team of sales representatives and experts from other departments. Sales representatives can receive valuable technical assistance from their other team members. For example, those who sell computer and data processing services might work with a systems engineer. Teams enhance customer service and build strong long-term relationships with customers, resulting in increased sales.

The entire sales process can be lengthy. Sometimes a sales rep may periodically contact a potential customer for years before they make a sale. Because of the amount of time between the initial contact with a customer and the actual sale, representatives are in contact with numerous existing and potential clients at the same time. Sales representatives must be well organized and efficient in managing their work. When customers express a interest in the service, sales reps who sell complex technical services may have to develop detailed proposals for presentation to the customer outlining the detailed services to be provided and their cost. Sometimes proposals must be revised several times before a client is willing to accept it. Selling less complex services, such as linen supply, cleaning, or pest control services, generally involves simpler and shorter sales negotiations.

Sales representative jobs may also vary with the size of the employer. Those working for large companies may be assigned a specific territory, a specific line of services, or specific types of clients. In smaller companies, sales representatives may have broader responsibilities—administrative, marketing, or public relations, for example—in addition to their sales duties.

Sales representatives often service a specific territory. Representatives of companies offering services widely used by the public, such as Internet service providers, generally have numerous clients in a relatively small territory. On the other hand, sales representatives for firms that offer more specialized services, such as interpretation and translation, might need to service several States to acquire an adequate customer base.

Working Conditions

Many services sales workers frequently work more than 40 hours per week. Selling can be stressful work because their income and job security directly depends on their success in winning business for their employers. Companies generally set sales quotas and have contests with prizes for those with the most sales. Considerable pressure is placed on the sales representative to meet monthly sales quotas.

Working conditions for sales representatives vary. Outside sales representatives responsible for a large territory might spend a great deal of time traveling, sometimes for weeks at a time. Representatives with smaller territories might never travel overnight. Outside sales representatives usually spend part of their time in an office keeping records, setting up appointments with customers, and searching for new customers. Increasingly, outside sales representatives work out of home offices or share office space with others rather than have their



Services sales representatives maintain customer relations on the phone and in person.

own permanently assigned space. Inside sales representatives and telemarketers spend all their time in their offices, which can range from bright and cheerful customer showrooms to cramped and noisy rooms.

Representatives often have the flexibility to set their own schedules as long as they meet their company's goals. The Internet allows representatives to do more work from home or while on the road, enabling them to send messages and documents to clients and co-workers, keep up with industry news, and access databases that help them to better target potential customers. Although they may accomplish more in less time, many work more hours than in the past, spending additional time on follow up and service calls.

Employment

Services sales representatives held over 841,000 jobs in 1998. Firms providing business services such as computer and data processing, contract telemarketing, personnel supply, and advertising provided two-thirds of all wage and salary jobs. The remainder of services sales representatives' jobs were in other service industries, including hotels and motels, motion pictures, education, and engineering and management services.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Some employers require services sales representatives to have a college degree, but requirements vary depending on the industry a company represents. Employers who market advertising services seek individuals with a college degree in advertising, marketing, or business administration. Companies marketing educational services prefer individuals with a degree in education, marketing, or a related field. Many hotels seek graduates of hotel or tourism administration programs. Companies selling computer, engineering, health or other highly technical services generally require a bachelor's degree appropriate to their field. Certification and licensing is also becoming more common for sales and marketing representatives.

Employers may hire sales reps with only a high school diploma, if they have a proven sales record. This is particularly true for those who sell non-technical services, such as amusement and recreation services, cleaning services, or photographic studios. Applicants enhance their chances of being hired into these positions if they have taken some relevant college courses. In general, smaller companies are more willing to hire unproven individuals.

Many firms conduct intensive training programs to acquaint new services sales representatives with the services and products of the firm, the history of the business, effective selling techniques, and administrative duties and policies. Sales representatives also attend seminars on a wide range of subjects given by outside or in-house trainers. These sessions acquaint them with new services and products or update their sales techniques or procedures and might include training to make them more effective in dealing with prospective customers.

To succeed, sales representatives should be persuasive and have a pleasant, outgoing, and enthusiastic disposition. Sales representatives must be highly motivated, energetic, well organized, and efficient. Good grooming and a neat appearance are essential, as are self-confidence, reliability, and the ability to communicate effectively. Sales representatives should be self-starters who have the ability to thrive under pressure to meet sales goals. They must also develop a thorough knowledge of the service they are selling, and anticipate and respond to their clients' questions and objections in a professional manner. In addition, they must be flexible to adjust to delays, problems, and the schedules of others.

Sales representatives with leadership ability and good sales records may advance to supervisory and managerial positions. Frequent contact with people in other firms provides sales reps with leads about job openings, enhancing advancement opportunities.

Job Outlook

Employment of services sales representatives, as a group, is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2008 in response to growth of the services industries employing them. However, projected employment growth of services sales representatives varies by industry. For example, continued growth in factory and office automation should lead to much faster than average employment growth for computer and data processing services sales representatives. Employment in personnel supply services will grow as companies continue to outsource and use temporary employees. Growth will be tempered in some industries by the expanded use of various technologies, such as voice and electronic mail, portable phones, and laptop computers that all increase sales workers' productivity—especially while out of the office.

In addition to the job openings generated by employment growth, openings will occur each year because of the need to replace sales workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. Each year, many sales representatives discover they are unable to earn enough money and leave the occupation. Turnover is generally higher among representatives who sell non-technical services. As a result of this turnover, job opportunities should be good, especially for those with a college degree or a proven sales record.

With improved technology, some companies are cutting back on the expense of travel and on-site presentations and putting more emphasis on in-house sales via the Internet, direct calling, and teleconferencing. In addition, temporary or contract sales people may be used more frequently for outside sales.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of services sales representatives in selected business services were \$34,910, including commission, in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$24,700 and \$49,030 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$17,640 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$79,790 a year. Median annual earnings in the service industries employing the largest numbers of sales agents in selected business services in 1997 were as follows:

Computer and data processing services	\$41,200
Management and public relations	34,000
Mailing, reproduction, and stenographic services	33,100
Miscellaneous business services	29,500
Personnel supply services	28,500

Median annual earnings of advertising sales agents, including commission, were \$31,850 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$22,600 and \$47,660 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$16,210 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$83,080 a year.

Median annual earnings of telemarketers and other related workers, including commission, were \$17,090 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$14,080 and \$21,830 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$12,350 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$30,290 a year.

Services sales representatives are paid under various systems. Some receive a straight salary; others are paid solely on a commission basis—a percentage of the dollar value of their sales. Most firms use a combination of salary and commissions. Some services sales representatives receive a base salary, plus incentive pay that can add from 25 to 75 percent to their base salary. Many employers offer bonuses, including vacation trips and prizes for sales that exceed company quotas. Sales are affected by changing economic conditions and consumer and business expectations and so earnings may vary greatly from year to year. In addition to the same benefits package provided to other employees of the firm, employers may provide outside sales representatives expense accounts to cover meals and travel, computer and office equipment for use while traveling or at home, and sometimes a company car.

Related Occupations

Services sales representatives must have sales ability and knowledge of the service they sell. Workers in other occupations requiring these skills include: Advertising, marketing, and public relations managers; insurance sales agents; manufacturers' and wholesale sales representatives; purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents; real estate agents and brokers; sales engineers; securities, commodities, and financial services sales representatives; and travel agents.

Sources of Additional Information

For details about career and certification information for services sales and marketing representatives, contact:

✦ Sales and Marketing Executives International, 5500 Interstate North Pkwy., Suite 545, Atlanta, GA 30328-4662.

Internet: <http://www.smei.org>

Travel Agents

(O*NET 43021)

Significant Points

- Training at a postsecondary vocational school or college or university is increasingly important for getting a job.
- Travel benefits, such as reduced rates for transportation and accommodations, attract many people to this occupation.
- Projected average employment growth reflects increases in spending on pleasure and business travel.

Nature of the Work

Constantly changing air fares and schedules, thousands of available vacation packages, and a vast amount of travel information on the Internet can make travel planning frustrating and time-consuming. To sort out the many travel options, tourists and businesspeople often turn to travel agents, who assess their needs and help them make the best possible travel arrangements. Also, many major cruise lines, resorts, and specialty travel groups use travel agents to promote travel packages to the millions of people who travel every year.

In general, travel agents give advice on destinations and make arrangements for transportation, hotel accommodations, car rentals, tours, and recreation. They may also advise on weather conditions, restaurants, and tourist attractions, and recreation. For international travel, agents also provide information on customs regulations, required papers (passports, visas, and certificates of vaccination), and currency exchange rates.

Travel agents consult a variety of published and computer-based sources for information on departure and arrival times, fares, and hotel ratings and accommodations. They may visit hotels, resorts, and restaurants to evaluate their comfort, cleanliness, and the quality of food and service so they can base recommendations on their own travel experiences or those of colleagues or clients.

Travel agents also promote their services, using telemarketing, direct mail, and the Internet. They make presentations to social and special interest groups, arrange advertising displays, and suggest company-sponsored trips to business managers. Depending on the size of the travel agency, an agent may specialize by type of travel, such as leisure or business, or destination, such as Europe or Africa.

Working Conditions

Travel agents spend most of their time behind a desk conferring with clients, completing paperwork, contacting airlines and hotels for travel arrangements, and promoting group tours. During vacation seasons and holiday periods they may be under a great deal of pressure. Many

agents, especially those who are self-employed, frequently work long hours. With advanced computer systems and telecommunication networks, some travel agents are able to work at home.

Employment

Travel agents held about 138,000 jobs in 1998 and are found in every part of the country. More than 9 out of 10 salaried agents worked for travel agencies. Many of the remainder worked for membership organizations.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

The minimum requirement for those interested in becoming a travel agent is a high school diploma or equivalent. Technology and computerization are having a profound effect on the work of travel agents, however, and formal or specialized training is becoming increasingly important. The minimum requirement for those interested in becoming a travel agent is a high school diploma or equivalent. Technology and computerization are having a profound effect on the work of travel agents, however, and formal or specialized training is becoming increasingly important. Many vocational schools offer 6- to 12-week full-time travel agent programs, as well as evening and weekend programs. Travel agent courses are also offered in public adult education programs and in community and 4-year colleges. A few colleges offer bachelor's or master's degrees in travel and tourism. Although few college courses relate directly to the travel industry, a college education is sometimes desired by employers to establish a background in fields such as computer science, geography, communication, foreign languages, and world history. Courses in accounting and business management



Travel agents compile information from various sources in order to plan their clients' travel itineraries.